



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes
Southern District of Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2006
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CONTACT: CHARLIE McNICHOL
PHONE: (251) 415-7131
FAX: (251) 441-5277

CITRONELLE RESIDENT SENTENCED FOR DEFRAUDING FEMA

FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA

MOBILE, AL-- Penny Sue Byrd, 35, was sentenced today for defrauding the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following Hurricane Katrina, United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes of the Southern District of Alabama announced.

Byrd was sentenced to five years' probation and was ordered by United States District Judge William H. Steele to pay \$2,000 in restitution to FEMA. On September 8, 2005, Byrd called FEMA, requesting assistance following Hurricane Katrina, falsely claiming that a travel trailer she lived in was destroyed by the storm. Byrd in fact lived in a house with her parents, and called FEMA in the hope of receiving a travel trailer. A \$2,000.00 check was mailed by FEMA to Byrd at her residence in Citronelle, and Byrd cashed the check. Byrd pled guilty to one count of making false claims to the government.

"We in the Southern District of Alabama are continuing our aggressive investigation and prosecution of hurricane-related crimes, and will continue to bring to justice those who saw this national disaster as an opportunity to make easy money," said Rhodes.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, and others.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sean Costello.

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